

Barry M. Goldwater Oral History Interview, 1/24/1965
Administrative Information

Creator: Barry M. Goldwater
Interviewer: Jack Bell
Date of Interview: January 24, 1965
Place of Interview: Washington D.C.
Length: 27 pages

Biographical Note

Goldwater, a senator from Arizona (1953-1965), discusses his time in the Senate with John F. Kennedy and their opposing positions on different issues, the 1960 presidential campaign, and the Bay of Pigs, among other issues.

Access Restrictions

Open.

Usage Restrictions

According to the deed of gift signed November 15, 1965, copyright has passed to the United States Government upon the death of the donor. Users of these materials are advised to determine the copyright status of any document from which they wish to publish.

Copyright

The copyright law of the United States (Title 17, United States Code) governs the making of photocopies or other reproductions of copyrighted material. Under certain conditions specified in the law, libraries and archives are authorized to furnish a photocopy or other reproduction. One of these specified conditions is that the photocopy or reproduction is not to be "used for any purpose other than private study, scholarship, or research." If a user makes a request for, or later uses, a photocopy or reproduction for purposes in excesses of "fair use," that user may be liable for copyright infringement. This institution reserves the right to refuse to accept a copying order if, in its judgment, fulfillment of the order would involve violation of copyright law. The copyright law extends its protection to unpublished works from the moment of creation in a tangible form. Direct your questions concerning copyright to the reference staff.

Transcript of Oral History Interview

These electronic documents were created from transcripts available in the research room of the John F. Kennedy Library. The transcripts were scanned using optical character recognition and the resulting text files were proofread against the original transcripts. Some formatting changes were made. Page numbers are noted where they would have occurred at the bottoms of the pages of the original transcripts. If researchers have any concerns about accuracy, they are encouraged to visit the library and consult the transcripts and the interview recordings.

Suggested Citation

Barry M. Goldwater, recorded interview by Jack Bell, January 24, 1965, (page number), John F. Kennedy Library Oral History Program.

Gift of Personal Statement

By Barry M. Goldwater

to the

John Fitzgerald Kennedy Library

In accordance with the provisions of the Federal Property and Administrative Services Act of 1949 as amended (63 Stat. 377) and regulations issued thereunder, I, Barry M. Goldwater, hereinafter referred to as the donor, hereby give, donate and convey to the United States of America for eventual deposit in the proposed John Fitzgerald Kennedy Library, and for administration therein by the authorities thereof, a tape and transcript of a personal statement approved by me and prepared for the purpose of deposit in the John Fitzgerald Kennedy Library. The gift of this material is made subject to the following terms and conditions:

1. Title to the material transferred hereunder will pass to the United States as of the date of the delivery of this material into the physical custody of the Archivist of the United States.

2. It is the donor's wish to make the material donated to the United States of America by the terms of this instrument available for research in the John Fitzgerald Kennedy Library as soon as possible. At the same time, it is his wish to guard against the possibility of its contents being used to embarrass, damage, injure or harass anyone. Therefore, in pursuance of this objective, and in accordance with the provisions of Sec. 507 (f) (3) of the Federal Property and Administrative Services Act of 1949, as amended, none of this material may be published in any manner without my prior written authorization to allow such use.

3. A revision of the above stipulation governing access to the aforesaid material may be entered into between the donor and the Archivist of the United States or his designee if it appears desirable to revise the conditions herein stipulated.

4. The material donated to the United States pursuant to the foregoing shall be kept intact permanently in the John Fitzgerald Kennedy Library.

5. The donor retains to himself during his lifetime all literary property rights in the material donated to the United States of America by the terms of this instrument. After the death of the donor, the aforesaid literary property rights will pass to the United States of America.

Signed Barry Goldwater
Barry M. Goldwater

Date: _____

Accepted Robert H. Baumer
ACTING Archivist of the United States

Date: Nov 15, 1965

Barry M. Goldwater

Table of Contents

<u>Page</u>	<u>Topic</u>
1	John F. Kennedy (JFK) on the Senate Labor Committee
5	JFK on foreign policy
6, 11	JFK's relationship with Lyndon B. Johnson
8	JFK's 1960 presidential campaign
10	Anecdotes about JFK in the Senate
12	Campaigning for Richard M. Nixon in 1960
15	JFK's inaugural speech
16	Bay of Pigs
20	Opposition to the Nuclear Test Ban Treaty
21, 25	JFK's presidential legacy
23	Possibility of running against JFK in 1964
26	Cuban Missile Crisis

Oral History Interview

with

Senator Barry M. Goldwater

January 24, 1965
Washington D.C.

By Jack Bell

For the John F. Kennedy Library

BELL: Senator, let's begin at the beginning. When did you first see John F. Kennedy?

GOLDWATER: Well, the first time I really met him was when I came to the Senate—and I forget the exact date. We served on the Labor and Public Welfare Committee together and I believe that was probably the first time that I saw him, although he did spend a little while in Arizona and I saw him out there but not to become acquainted. He stayed at a friend's ranch down near Tucson after the war to help get—help him out with that bad back of his.

BELL: What was your first impression of Kennedy?

GOLDWATER: Well, I liked him right from the start. He was an easy fellow to meet—had no reserve at all about him. He had a great sense of humor and it stuck out in front of him so far you couldn't miss it. He was a fellow that liked life—you could also detect that.

BELL: You had quite a few arguments with him in that Labor Committee, as I recall it. You had one specific occasion in which you sort of had

a shouting match.

[-1 -]

GOLDWATER: Well, it wasn't a shouting match in anger—it was a shouting match in fun. I remember he used to look at me and he'd say: "You know, Barry, every time I vote I can watch you wince. You're a conservative. Really down deep at heart I am too, but I have to get elected in Massachusetts." Well, this argument in the Labor Committee came over reporting a bill from the Sub-Committee on Labor of which he was chairman and I was the ranking minority member, and reporting this bill to the full committee.

BELL: Do you recall what the bill was?

GOLDWATER: Yes, It was the Kennedy-Ervin Bill—what later became the Landrum-Griffin Bill. I didn't like the bill—I didn't think it was a good bill. But he wanted to get it to the floor, so he called a meeting. I stayed outside the room, knowing they didn't have a quorum and I didn't think they would but if I went in I would have made the quorum. So I stood outside the door and we were yelling back and forth at each other, having a good time. He was trying to stress the rule that—they said if I were in the building, it constituted a quorum. And he finally sent one of his aides over to ask the Parliamentarian in the Senate. As I recall it, the Parliamentarian told him in effect that if I was in the building that was a quorum. Later the Parliamentarian said he didn't say any such thing. But anyway

[-2 -]

Jack went ahead and called the committee to order and I figured oh, what the hell, I might as well get in there and cast my vote against it, which I did.

BELL: Did they report it out by—what margin, do you recall?

GOLDWATER: As I recall it, I was the only one who voted against it in the sub-committee and the full committee—Everett Dirksen [Everett M. Dirksen] and I voted against it, feeling that it didn't really get at the heart of the trouble that the Rackets Committee had disclosed. And, of course, we were vindicated in this—I was the only one that voted against it in the Senate.

BELL: I was going to ask you what sort of a job did Kennedy do in a legislative way in sponsoring this particular bill through the Senate?

GOLDWATER: Well, he did a superb job. He was selling a product that I didn't believe in. He honestly felt that it was a good piece of legislation and I differed with him. But on the floor, he handled himself very well. I never will forget one night we were debating, I was trying to get an amendment through, and

he lost his voice. He came over and stood in front of me and he whispered, "I've lost my voice." I said, "All right, I can't debate with you if you're going to be silent, but take my amendment." And he nodded his head and that was that. He did a good job on the floor. He always did.

BELL: Did his homework pretty well?

[-3 -]

GOLDWATER: Well, this was one faculty he had that I certainly admired. He was a man who really didn't have to do homework as we think of it—as I have to do, for example—come back here to study, study, study. He could have an adviser with him on the floor or in committee and know absolutely nothing about the subject and listen to this adviser for just relatively a few minutes and get up and make a good case for himself and then as he went on, he retained all these things and he picked it up in debate. He had a memory like a blotter. Now, I don't know how long he would retain these things but I've watched him in committee, I watched him, for example, during the meeting between the two houses on the Kennedy-Ervin Bill that went back to the House and became the Landrum-Griffin Bill. We met for sixteen days, I believe it was, on this, all day long every day. He had Archibald Cox advise him on points that I knew Jack didn't understand, but with just a word or two with Cox he'd come out roaring.

BELL: He was a quick study, in other words?

GOLDWATER: Very quick, very quick.

BELL: Well, outside of the labor field, was he interested in other legislation which you opposed?

GOLDWATER: Well, never to an active point. Of course, you have to remember that last year that he was in the Senate—1960—I guess that was the last year...

[-4 -]

BELL: Yes. That was the year he was nominated.

GOLDWATER: He was practically never in the Senate. I don't think he made more than twenty roll calls the whole year. So, I'll have to go back throughout the other years we were together and I can't remember any legislation that he and I ever debated on the floor other than legislation that came out of our committee.

BELL: Well—that would cover aid to education...

GOLDWATER: Oh, it would cover aid to education but we never really got an aid to education bill on the floor. Of course, had we gotten one there, he would have been hamstrung by the fact that he was a Catholic and would have been rather hard-pressed to support any legislation that didn't recognize the need for aid in the parochial schools. We debated—oh, on other things that came out of that committee—I can't recall just precisely what the subjects were. About the only other thing I ever knew him to be really interested in outside of his own state of Massachusetts was foreign policy. He made several good speeches on this. I didn't necessarily agree with all of them but some of them made darn good sense.

BELL: Well, he made one rather famous speech on Algeria.

GOLDWATER: Yes, I recall that

[-5-]

BELL: What was your position at that time? Did you more or less agree with him?

GOLDWATER: Well, I agreed more with him than I opposed him on it. I thought that the timing was bad but I thought the substance of his speech was sound. It was well thought out and very well delivered.

BELL: Did you regard him as being something as an expert on foreign affairs at that point?

GOLDWATER: No. I never thought of him as an expert in that field or, for that matter, in any field. He was an expert in himself. He's the kind of fellow that could have taken on any task and done it well.

BELL: What do you know about his relationship with Lyndon Johnson [Lyndon B. Johnson] at that point—when he was in the Senate?

GOLDWATER: Well, as I recall it, they weren't too good. There was never any love lost there. They were complete opposites. Jack was a highly educated man trained in the ways of, you might say, gentlemen. He was smooth where Lyndon was rough—a Westerner who got his way by the use of power more than the use of reason where Jack, I would suspect, could have used power just as well as his brother, Bobby [Robert F. Kennedy], but he preferred to resort to persuasion.

[-6-]

BELL: Well, as a matter of fact, he was never a member of the inner circle in the Senate?

GOLDWATER: No. As such, no. Well, he didn't try to be. Jack was never around the Senate a whole lot.

BELL: Politically, you have had some experiences with this gentleman too. What was your first political connection with him—or association—or clash?

GOLDWATER: Well, I wouldn't say that our first association was a clash. Politically. I was chairman of the Republican Senate Campaign Committee for a great number of years and when he started showing an interest in the presidency, I would give him a weekly report. I'd get back from my travels on the weekends—raising money and working for candidates—and I'd see him in committee or see him on the floor and say: "Well, Jack, I was in Des Moines this last week"—or someplace else—"and you look good or you look bad, and I suggest you do this or that." And I was doing it in more of a serious way than in a kidding way. And, we used to talk about it.

BELL: Was there any quid pro quo on this? In other words, did he give you information about Republican chances?

GOLDWATER: No, he didn't. He couldn't care less about Republicans. [Laughter] He was a full-born Democrat.

[-7-]

BELL: I suppose at this point you were telling him how he stood in relation to Johnson.

GOLDWATER: Well, in relation to Johnson, and Humphrey [Hubert H. Humphrey], and Morse [Wayne L. Morse], but mostly just how he stood, because there was never any question in my mind that he would get the nomination. For a while, I thought he would have a harder time than he did have but after I watched his machine operate I knew there was no question about it.

BELL: What sort of machine was this?

GOLDWATER: Well, of course, it started out mostly with Bobby—sort of a one-man go. And then his staff—Sorensen [Theodore C. Sorensen] and the rest that he added to it. These were real savvy smart young fellows. None of them had ever been in politics at this level. But they worked together as a team. They had new ideas. They made full use of every modern technique and modern gadget. And I just frankly admired them. In fact, people have said to me, "How did you put together such an efficient machine to get delegates?" I said, "I just read the book *The Making of the President* and used more of the newer things than they had."

BELL: How do you go about actually—how did he go about getting these

delegations?

GOLDWATER: Well, we did it the same way, although he worked harder at it you might say, in the hustings. He made more speeches.

[-8-]

He worked Wisconsin, for example, and West Virginia. I didn't. I just relied, as he did, mostly on personal contacts with the people we felt would be delegates and particularly with the people who headed up the party machinery. To my mind, this is the only way you can get them. You can make speeches until your hair falls out and you don't get delegates. You've got to go out and buttonhole them—talk to them.

BELL: In other words, the grassroots technique, where you go into each individual state and have your people try to line up the people who may become delegates?

GOLDWATER: That's right. I got that technique from him. That's what he did. I used to ask him, "Jack, you're not going into this state or you're not going into that state—why? And, he said, "Well, I really am going into those states but you don't read about it. I go out there and spend a weekend at somebody's house and they'll have friends in all during the day and evening and I'll talk with them." That's how he got them. And when he wasn't talking to them, Bobby was.

BELL: Before we leave the Senate, I think you were involved in two or three rather humorous incidents with him there, weren't you?

GOLDWATER: In the Senate? Oh, yes—we—he was always fun. He had, as I said, a good sense of humor. We used to debate back and forth. I'll never forget one time—I wish I'd saved

[-9-]

this piece of paper—I can't tell you what it said because it was rather bad language, but I was debating with Herbert Lehman [Herbert H. Lehman] on some subject—I forget what it was—and I knew Jack wanted to get out of there and I wanted to get out too. He was in the chair and he wrote me a note, "How big a _____ can you be? Well, I got pretty mad and I took it up to him and tore it up and threw it in front of him. I wish I had kept it. I think if I had kept it I could have been Ambassador to England.

BELL: Well, we can put it off the record what the note said.

GOLDWATER: [Off the record]

BELL: Well, going back a little bit further, during the primary campaigns,

did you ever run across him? I mean personally when you were out somewhere?

GOLDWATER: No. I think the closest I ever came to running into him was when I was leaving Washington from Butler Aviation early in the morning in my own plane—I forget where I was going—and his plane, *The Caroline*, landed and was taxiing up as I taxied out. That was the morning that he'd won in West Virginia.

BELL: Well, after he was nominated and came back to the Senate, do you recall anything specific in your association with him at that point?

[-10-]

GOLDWATER: No, because everything went pretty fast then. Of course, again it seemed like Johnson was doing everything to make him look bad. Legislation that Kennedy felt that he should have to help him in his campaign, as I recall it, Johnson was looking the other way on.

BELL: You mean before the nomination or after the nomination?

GOLDWATER: Even after the nomination.

BELL: You're saying in effect that Johnson was still sabotaging?

GOLDWATER: Yes. That was my opinion. He didn't want him to look too good. That was—oh, frankly, Jack—that was an unholy wedding. I'll never forget—you remember we recessed for the conventions. I was in Lyndon's office at 4:00 the morning we recessed, having some drinks with him—as you know, he can have a few—and I said, “Are you going to go out there and take the second spot?” And he said, “Hell, no.” He said he was going to get the first spot or he wouldn't take anything. So when I was watching television at home and I saw him nominated as vice president, I wrote him a note in longhand. I said, “Sitting here trying to think of how I feel about your taking the nomination and all I can think of is ‘nauseated.’” And every time he'd see me for a long time afterwards, he'd say, “Barry, are you still nauseated?” And I'd say, “Hell, yes.”

[-11-]

BELL: Did he ever write you back formally about this, or just kid you?

GOLDWATER: Lyndon? No. We just kidded back and forth.

BELL: Well, now, after he was nominated you, of course, campaigned against Kennedy.

GOLDWATER: Yes.

BELL: What did you say? I assume you said a lot of things, but what did you say more or less specifically against him—in opposition to him? What line did you take?

GOLDWATER: Well, I never made it a practice to campaign personally—campaign against another man's personality or his character. I don't recall ever having frankly used his name. I used the party, the fact that he was backed by organized labor, he was backed by Americans for Democratic Action. But I spoke more of the Republican platform and the nominee than I did against him. I couldn't campaign against him because, frankly, I liked him. I had admiration for him but I didn't think he was the man to be President. I thought Nixon was and that's the approach I took.

BELL: Well, during the campaign, though, didn't it become apparent to you that Nixon [Richard M. Nixon] wasn't getting over as he should have? At the start of the campaign did you think Kennedy could be defeated?

[-12-]

GOLDWATER: Yes, I felt Kennedy could be defeated rather handily up until the first television debate. And what happened during that debate wasn't what Nixon said or didn't say or how he looked. It was how Kennedy came across. I think my sister put it better than anyone else. I remember I was flying to Pasadena to speak that night and on the way over I heard the radio show and I would have given Nixon the debate on points on the radio. But at the dinner it was televised and shown up on a big screen and I said, "Oh, my God." When I got home that night my sister was at the house and she said, "You know, that Kennedy is not so young." And, of course, this blew out of water the idea we were saying, "Don't send a boy to do a man's job." He looked smart, he looked eager, he looked bright. And this got over and Nixon never could catch up from it. I think that was the campaign, you might say, right there; and Dick could never get it back. From then on in, Jack had it.

BELL: What advice did you give Nixon after that?

GOLDWATER: Well, I never saw Nixon. Funny thing about that. I didn't see Nixon from October the 13th, when he was in Phoenix, Arizona, until this last year. In other words, almost four years went by and I never laid eyes on Dick. We'd write once in a while, but give him advice? That was one of the complaints. Ask Len Hall [Leonard W. Hall]. Len didn't get to see him. We

[-13-]

just never saw Dick. He wouldn't come to the meetings we had here weekly on results of surveys and so forth. But having been a candidate myself, I can't criticize Dick because I found out it is almost impossible to seek advice—leave alone stop and listen to it. You never have the time.

BELL: Do you think Kenney had more contact with his campaign managers? Obviously, he had close personal contact with Bobby—but with the other people?

GOLDWATER: I think his travelling team had very close contact with him. But, of course, they were very bright young fellows. And I think he was in constant possession of more up-to-the-minute news and facts than Nixon had.

BELL: But just through the efforts of his team or because he was able to absorb these things faster?

GOLDWATER: Because the team was always ready. They were with him all the time. I know in my campaign, this was the only real contact I had. On my plane I had five or six people and I used to change them. I got this from him—from Jack. The people would travel with me and say, “Well, now, we think you said this wrong. You put this across wrong. Let's try it this way.” But even with the five or six I had and the fact that I had a teletype on board, I still was lacking in information from time to time.

[-14-]

BELL: Difficult to keep with developments...

GOLDWATER: Awfully hard.

BELL: Well, let's go to the time after the election. Did you have any contact with him before he was inaugurated?

GOLDWATER: No, I didn't. And I even missed his Inauguration because Peggy [Margaret Goldwater] and I went to New York to go to a show the night before and, of course, it snowed like I'd never seen it snow before and we didn't get back here until the day after the Inauguration. No, the first time...

BELL: Well, before we get off to that, what did you think of his Inaugural speech, particularly “Ask not what...”

GOLDWATER: Well, I thought it was an excellent speech. In fact, I had used practically that same phrase many times myself. Neither one of us

were the authors of it. But it was a good phrase and I still think it is an excellent one. In fact, I used to kid him and asked him why he didn't stop having people work twenty-four hours a day to think up things they could do for people that they should be doing for themselves.

BELL: In other words, you regarded this as sort of a phony?

GOLDWATER: Well, it was a phony in that he didn't follow through on it. He didn't give people a chance.

BELL: What was your first contact after he became president?

[-15-]

GOLDWATER: Well, that's kind of hard to say. I remember when General White [Thomas D. White] was given...

BELL: The Air Force Commander?

GOLDWATER: Yes, given an award. Jack asked me to come up because General White and I are old friends. When General O'Donnell—Rosie O'Donnell [Emmett O'Donnell, Jr.]—retired, he asked me to come up because, again, Rosie and I are old friends. And I'll never forget that Rosie, a very funny character, I don't know if you were there or not, but he had his uniform on and after the President had given him a Distinguished Service Medal, Rosie said, "You know, Mr. President, I had a hard time getting these ribbons off my pajamas." I think the most memorable visit I had with Jack was on the day of the Bay of Pigs. I was out at Andrews Air Force Base just preparing to get into a jet to fly out west. I had my flight suit on and was just about to climb in when the message came that the President wanted to see me. Well, that's not a request, that's an order. So, I took off my suit and got dressed and went down to the White House. I'll never forget this.

BELL: Were you there alone with him at that point?

GOLDWATER: When I got there he wasn't in the office. So his secretary said, "Oh, just go on in. Make yourself at home." So I went in. You see, he and I had the same doctor—Doctor

[-16-]

Travell [Janet G. Travell]—in fact, he made her available to me before he was president and after he was in office I could see Doctor Travell.

BELL: She's an expert on...

GOLDWATER: On muscles and the back, particularly. But I was sitting in his rocking chair which she prescribed. She had been trying to get me to get one. And I never will forget this—and God, I hope they don't play this for a long, long time—he came in and he had a little cigar in his mouth—you know, those little cigarette cigars. He looked down and he said, “Do you want this _____ job?” I said, “Hell, no.” He said, “I thought I had a pretty good thing going up until this morning.” And then we got into the Bay of Pigs thing. I asked him why he thought I should know about it. He said, well, he wanted people in both parties, particularly conservatives and liberals and moderates, to know what happened.

BELL: You were also a member of the Armed Services...

GOLDWATER: Well, that's the truth. It was rather strange because in the Republican Party, I think he talked with General Eisenhower [Dwight D. Eisenhower] and later with Rockefeller [Nelson A. Rockefeller] and with me. But I was surprised that he would even bother to call me. But he went into what happened as far as he could—at great length.

[-17-]

BELL: Did he blame anybody?

GOLDWATER: No. At that time it was too early in the game. He didn't tell me that this man or that man advised him to call off the second strike on the airbases in Cuba. But I went away with the feeling that he pretty much felt that it was his fault—that he shouldn't have done this and whoever told him...

BELL: He shouldn't have called off the second strike?

GOLDWATER: He shouldn't have called off the second strike. We never got down to specifics. I, of course, didn't know about this plan. It shows that you can keep secrets in government. This plan was, of course, developed by Eisenhower and when Kennedy came in, the CIA and the State Department kept on developing it. I never got to talk to Jack after that. I was always interested to know just what his real feelings were about that. I'm convinced that somebody in the middle of the night talked him out of the second strike. If they hadn't talked him out of it, I feel certain that the attempt would have been successful. I never felt that it in itself would have unseated Castro [Fidel Castro] but we would have had upwards of two thousand trained men on the island engaging in acts of sabotage and so on and I feel eventually Castro would have been overthrown as a result of it. But maybe somebody in this kind of a discussion will bring out these things that I never got to find out myself.

[-18-]

BELL: Did he tell you he thought he had bad advice or...

GOLDWATER: No, he didn't. But I went away feeling that—my hunch was that he was sorry that he had done what he did and that he...

BELL: He was sorry that he had undertaken it in the first place?

GOLDWATER: No, sorry that he had stopped the plan, that he had called off the second strike. This was the only thing he did that actually upset the thing. I did learn later through Navy friends that the carrier Essex, I think it was, was standing off about thirty-five miles and that they had planes aloft. I also heard that these planes had their markings off. I never could verify that. I heard this from a young Cuban who was handling the radio and he was pleading with the Admiral on the Essex to send the aircraft in for a strike and he told me, this young Cuban said the Admiral said, "It's past my hands. Only God can help." And later I found out that this was substantially true—that he had received orders not to send these planes in. The planes themselves were armed and ready to go but the Admiral couldn't give the order.

BELL: In the period that followed this, you opposed the Kennedy legislative program very vigorously, didn't you?

GOLDWATER: Well, most of them because they were diametric to everything that the Republicans had stood for and that I had stood for.

[-19-]

The test ban treaty, for example. I opposed that and I think I was right and I think now I am beginning to be proved that I was right in that we can't dig canals and we find that the Russians are testing and we're getting fallout from their tests. We said all these things during the hearings.

BELL: Did he ever attempt, directly or indirectly, to influence your vote on this test ban treaty?

GOLDWATER: No. No, that's something that he never did. In fact, I've never had anybody try to influence my vote because they realize I'm sort of a hardheaded dog and I don't change.

BELL: Well, perhaps that isn't the right phrase. But did he try to convince you in any way that...

GOLDWATER: No, neither directly or indirectly. He never called me on any legislation, particularly this one. You see, we on the Preparedness Sub-Committee with the exception of Symington [Stuart Symington, II]—I believe he was the only one who voted for the Test Ban Treaty—had heard all the scientific and technical aspects of this. We had heard from the Chiefs of Staff who, to a man,

were opposed to this treaty but when they appeared before the Foreign Relations Committee, said they would support it. They had their “ifs.” I was very surprised when LeMay [Curtis E. LeMay] supported it. I fully expected him to resign before he supported it. But he went along with it. As I recall, Kennedy agreed to a provision whereby a ready force

[-20-]

would be established. That is, if the Russians broke the treaty or if we at any time wanted to break it, we would have a force standing by ready to go into testing. Now, the truth of the matter is that this force has never been set up. As far as I know, there is not even anyone responsible for it in the Pentagon. This is material that will come out eventually. It’s classified now, but it’s in the hands of the Preparedness Sub-Committee. I opposed his federal aid to education. I opposed the Medicare plan.

BELL: What kind of President do you—looking back on it—do you think he made in the brief period he had?

GOLDWATER: Well, he had too brief a period really but I do think that—I think you have to forget the question of what kind of a president did he make if you’re thinking in the context of comparing him with other presidents, asking what did he accomplish. I think his biggest accomplishment was that he gave to the office a new look, you might say. I think his wife [Jacqueline Bouvier Kennedy] was probably his greatest asset in that she brought her own qualities into the White House and to a large extent what he accomplished would be along the same lines of what she accomplished. He gave the presidency a new look.

BELL: New verve?

GOLDWATER: Well, new life, yes. He brought something to it that hadn’t been there. Something I imagine had never been there before...

[-21-]

youth and vitality. There was always a sense of something going on even if there was nothing going on.

BELL: It was sort of a T.R. in that respect?

GOLDWATER: Yes, but in a different way than T.R. I don’t know if history is ever going to record really what kind of president this man was as we think of the good or bad that he did or didn’t do. I don’t think, frankly, that he set too well with foreign leaders. I never felt that his visit with Khrushchev [Nikita Sergeyeovich Khrushchev] was productive. I never felt that his visit with de Gaulle [Charles A. de Gaulle] was productive. The truth of the matter is that he never exercised what you and I would call Presidential leadership.

BELL: Do you think he was merely keeping up with public opinion rather than trying to change it? Or form it?

GOLDWATER: I think that was the case. No, he didn't try to form it. His speeches were good speeches—they were well-written, well delivered. But they were nothing new except the life, the vitality of them. I can see him there yet with that fist up in the air getting a point across. I wish he had lived the whole four years because I always felt he was just beginning to really understand the responsibilities of that office when he died.

BELL: Do you think any Republican could have defeated him in '64 if he had lived?

[-22-]

GOLDWATER: Well, I felt that I could, frankly. And I think that he felt that I had a chance. The tide was turning against him at the time he passed away. Certainly he couldn't have carried the South. The business fraternity was against him. I felt that I had a fair to middling chance of defeating him. I wouldn't have bet a lot of money on it.

BELL: Well, the circumstances, of course, were different in relation to Johnson and Kennedy, but I assume you believe that Kennedy would have been much easier to defeat than Johnson?

GOLDWATER: Yes, because of one thing: Kennedy would not have been afraid to debate as Johnson was. Kennedy would have been—I imagine he would have agreed to go along with me in town after town and have personal debates on the subjects and the issues. Johnson was afraid to get out of his shell. In fact, he never talked about an issue in his life. Kennedy enjoyed that kind of thing and I really looked forward to a campaign against Jack. When he died I told my wife I wasn't going to run.

BELL: I wondered about that. Where were you on the day he was assassinated? What were the circumstances?

GOLDWATER: Well, my mother-in-law, Mrs. Johnson, had passed away and Peggy and I and her uncle and my children were flying to Muncie, Indiana. We landed at O'Hare Field in Chicago and

[-23-]

my nephew came up to me and said: "The President has been shot." I said, "Ray, you're crazier than hell." Well, we got to Butler Aviation where we were to pick up a private plane

to fly to Muncie and I heard it there on the radio—that he had not only been shot but that he had died. And then we flew on down to Muncie and, of course, I was terribly upset about my mother-in-law's passing. I just couldn't believe that Jack had been killed. In fact, I can't believe it to this day. It's something that—it just doesn't seem to have ever happened.

BELL: You said you told Peggy that you wouldn't run at that point?

GOLDWATER: That's right.

BELL: What caused that decision?

GOLDWATER: Well, I...

BELL: Reaction to this?

GOLDWATER: No. The fact of the matter is that I never wanted to run for the damn thing. I used to tell you that. I could feel myself getting boxed in more and more and more and I felt well, this was a good way to get out of it. Just tell them, "No. Under these circumstances I don't want to run." Johnson, as I said, would not allow the issues to go to the people. Johnson would use every power at his command even down to the bureaus—which he did—it turned out exactly the way I had seen it. I just didn't relish running against Johnson.

[-24-]

BELL: Kennedy's death really destroyed or seemed to destroy at the time the so-called Southern strategy, didn't it?

GOLDWATER: Well, I'm glad you said so-called because that's never been a strategy of mine or anybody else's. No, it didn't. That had no bearing on it. I don't care who the Democrat was or who the Democrat will be the next time, the South has been going more and more Republican since '48, but you might go clear back to the days of Al Smith [Alfred E. Smith]. The Republican presidential candidates have not done badly in the South. I felt, of course, that Johnson might do better in the South than Kennedy but as it turned out he didn't do much better than Jack would have done.

BELL: Do you think Kennedy would have gotten as many states as Johnson did?

GOLDWATER: No. No, I don't think so. I think Kennedy would not have gotten Texas or Florida. And Johnson wouldn't have gotten Texas if Johnson wasn't a Texan. They said he's a son of a bitch, but he's ours.

BELL: Now, to sum up more or less. What do you think history will say

about Kennedy and his tenure? Will it mark an epoch in American life or is this just...

GOLDWATER: Well, I can't say. I've often thought about that. I've often said that I wished I was going to be around here in

[-25-]

a hundred years to see how history looks at him. He didn't have time enough really to prove himself. I will say that the one great thing that he did—we talked about it earlier—he brought something to that office that had been needed. Roosevelt gave it a little bit of it. Although Roosevelt wasn't young enough. The Eisenhower years were strictly business. Kennedy's contributions were of a personal nature. I don't look upon his accomplishments as being great. His so-called confrontation in Cuba, in my opinion, was a proper thing. I've always thought it was done politically and I'll never think otherwise.

BELL: Were you involved in any way in that Cuban Missile Crisis?

GOLDWATER: No, except we had pointed—Ken Keating [Kenneth B. Keating] and I together had been pointing out on the floor of the Senate since June of that year that there were missiles in Cuba, that we should be doing something about it. In fact, I wrote down on a piece of paper flying back from Arizona after Labor Day that year that on or about the middle of October Kennedy would do something about Cuba and I gave it to Sam Shafer of *Newsweek*. And Sam, like you guys do, he printed it. But Kennedy could have pulled this confrontation off at any time and he should have done it earlier. I don't hesitate a moment to say, as I've said before, I feel it was a politically motivated operation and it certainly cost the Republican Party a lot of seats in the House of Representatives. There's no

[-26-]

question of that. I'll never forget for four or five days I was just like a fish out of water—what the hell could you say? You had to back your president—it was the right act. He didn't go far enough or long enough with it. I think at that time we could have completely toppled Castro and we wouldn't have had to have any bloodshed on our part about it. I wasn't involved in it at all although I was on active duty with the Air Force while it was still going on and I was in Florida and visited and talked with the outfits down there.

BELL: Well, but you did support his action?

GOLDWATER: Oh, yes. I supported everything he said.

BELL: You think he may have gotten more out of Khrushchev, for instance, if he had pushed this a little harder?

GOLDWATER: I never worried about Khrushchev in this because Khrushchev was too far away. He never could have come to the aid of Castro. He can't today. He doesn't have the airlift capability, nor the sealift capability, and he's too many thousands of miles away to get in to help. I felt that had we continued this pressure and then encouraged some action by the exiled Cubans, we could have effected the removal of Castro.

BELL: Well, I think that about wraps it up, don't you?

GOLDWATER: Yes, I can't think of anything else.

[END OF INTERVIEW]

[-27-]

Barry M. Goldwater Oral History Transcript
Name Index

C

Castro, Fidel, 18, 27
Cox, Archibald, 4

D

de Gaulle, Charles A., 22
Dirksen, Everett M., 3

E

Eisenhower, Dwight D., 17, 18, 26

G

Goldwater, Margaret "Peggy", 15, 23, 24

H

Hall, Leonard W., 13
Humphrey, Hubert H., 8

J

Johnson, Lyndon B., 6, 8, 11, 12, 23, 24, 25
Johnson, Mrs., 23, 24

K

Keating, Kenneth B., 26
Kennedy, Jacqueline Bouvier, 21
Kennedy, John F., 1, 3, 4, 6, 7, 9, 10, 11, 12, 13,
18, 20, 23, 24, 25, 26
Kennedy, Robert F., 6, 8, 9, 14
Khrushchev, Nikita Sergeyevich, 22, 27

L

Lehman, Herbert H., 10
LeMay, Curtis E., 20

M

Morse, Wayne L., 8

N

Nixon, Richard M., 12, 13, 14

O

O'Donnell, Emmett "Rosie", Jr., 16

R

Rockefeller, Nelson A., 17

S

Shafer, Sam, 26
Smith, Alfred E., 25
Sorensen, Theodore C., 8
Symington, Stuart, II, 20

T

Travell, Janet G., 16, 17

W

White, Thomas D., 16